

THE BOSTON INFORMER

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The truly highbrow rag for people who can read

April 1, 2000

New Big Dig Financing Strategy Unveiled!



Ponte Vecchio, Florence



Ponte di Rialto, Venice



Tobin Bridge

Central Artery Bridge Loans — The latest proposal to bridge the financing gap for the Big Dig shortfall is to incorporate commercial and retail ventures into the Commonwealth's bridges, similar to that done with the original London Bridge, Ponte Vecchio and Ponte di Rialto bridges.

Beginning with the Tobin Bridge, the state is seeking developers and lessees to surround the superstructure for six stories above the road and one story below the road. Masspike is also redesigning the Charles River cable-stay bridge supports to incorporate twin office towers with a horizontal elevator built into the Fleet Center to ease access and leasing.

Headlines You'll Never Read

- ◆ Auditor Joe DeNucci gives CA/T Project Efficiency Award
- ◆ Mayor Menino names park in Brighton for former BRA director Tom O'Brien
- ◆ Steve Kaiser to head Green Line operations division at MBTA
- ◆ Transit Query Stumps MBTA Librarian George Sanborn
- ◆ City Replaces Pedestrian Safety Program with Vigorous Traffic Enforcement at Urging of WalkBoston
- ◆ Bechtel/Parsons Brinckerhoff Offers to Forgo Extra CA/T Fees
- ◆ Governor Declares Urban Ring High Priority
- ◆ City Hall Plaza Arcade Wins Design Award
- ◆ Mayor Swaps City Car for Bicycle

Traffic Calming



Taming traffic — Under pressure to embrace "traffic calming," the City of Boston has joined forces with the MBTA to tame traffic with a demonstration program to slow traffic at areas with heavy pedestrian traffic. The City will create special "Movement-Restricted Zones" at Post Office Square (above), Dewey Square and City Hall. During peak hours, the MBTA will dispatch surplus and outdated buses to block travel lanes, stop in intersections and circle without purpose.

If successful, the City will buy its own surplus large vehicles—dump trucks, tanks and cement mixers—to expand the program.

They Said It!

"Kerasiotes said the \$300 million [extra] for 'acceleration' [to meet 2004 end date] is necessary, and slowing down the Big Dig's progress would only increase the price tag in the end."

Boston Globe, 3/9/00

"To contract new debt is not the way to pay old ones."

George Washington

"In its regional impacts, this project is vertical sprawl."

Back Bay resident Shirley Kressel on proposed Boylston Square project.

"Calling a bus rapid transit is like calling a transvestite a woman."

North Shore transit activist Fred Moore.

"Expenditure rises to meet income—individual expenditure not only rises to meet income but tends to surpass it...[and] what is true of individuals is also true of government."

C. Northcote Parkinson of "Parkinson's Law" fame

Repeat the following words at every press conference: "Thanks to the Mayor..."

Boston Business Journal columnist Jay Fitzgerald's advice to new Boston Redevelopment Authority director Mark Maloney.

"The Federal Transit Administration has been described as a religious institution that gave out money and prayed it was used as intended."

Deputy Inspector General Raymond J. DeCarli

"Project proponents are encouraged to be creative with building heights...by permitting a portion of a project to rise above Chapter 91 heights...blocks can become smaller, and buildings can become slimmer..."

City of Boston Municipal Harbor Plan Request for Scope, pg. 39.

1 Although Mayor Menino announced that the proposed Turnpike sling-shot ramp won't be built anytime soon because of the CA/T cost explosion, the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) is set to announce a new solution. Capitalizing on a recent New Hampshire yard sale of chair lifts, the City bought the lot and will install the system to carry conventioners between Back Bay hotels and the new Convention Center in South Boston.

When asked about the wisdom of this technology in the harsh Boston climate, BTD officials said Boston weather is not as severe as people think and whipped out a 10-year weather chart to prove it. In addition, BTD officials read in The Boston Informer that the Convention Center will be empty 50 percent of the time anyway, so there's nothing to worry about.

2 *Ἰν περὲν ἰντερπλεῶ, Μασσα-
χηρσιότις Τυρνπικε Χηραϊμαν θάμες
Keratiotes* *ώας θυοτεδ ασ σαφινγ γοπ-
ερνορ φεαρσ ημι ανδ μαδε δερογατορψ
ρεμαρκσ αβουτ σταφφ, αιδεσ (μορον
ανδ ρεπιτλε). Ηε διδνэт μεντιον Barry
Locke, φορμερ ηεαd οφ τρανσιτ αυ-
τηοριτη, βυτ ρεαδερσ ωονδερεδ ηωω ηε
μυητ ηαπε ρεφερρεδ το ημι (χυε βαλλ?).*

A Poem for Our Times

Never ask of money spent
Where the spender thinks it went.
Nobody was ever meant
To remember or invent
What he did with every cent.
Robert Frost

Quotes We Know We'll Never Hear

"It's all my fault."
Masspike Chair James Kerasiotes
"No, it's all my fault."
Governor Paul Cellucci
"The Legislature will take a pay cut to help pay for the Big Dig."
State President Birmingham and Speaker Finneran
"We agree: 150 feet is high enough."
Pritzker brothers about building on the Fan Pier.

Movies Not to Miss!

Scream 3—Gothic story of the taxpayers' reaction to the third Big Dig cost increase in seven years.

Boys Don't Cry—Heroic tale of Governor Cellucci stoicism when told of the \$1.4 billion Big Dig overrun.

Galaxy Quest—Search for a master planner to combine all of Boston's master plans.

Pitch Black—Shadow study of the proposed Boston Convention Center after sunset.

Cradle Will Rock—Touching story of adoring state employees tending to Lt. Governor Swift's baby.

Girl Interrupted—Massport Director Virginia Buckingham explaining the need for a new runway to Congressman Joseph Moakely.

The Big Tease—Suspense drama about the unveiling of Frank McCourt's development plans on the South Boston Waterfront.

The End of the Affair—Last voyage of former Massport Director Peter Blute and companions on Boston Harbor.

The Green Mile—Heart-rending tragedy of how the money ran out before the last mile of the old Central Artery could be demolished.

3 Strikes—The final call on the Red Sox getting state money for a new Fenway Park.

What Planet Are You From—Touching story of visiting aliens who think Boston projects are always on-budget and on-schedule.

Topsy Turvey—The history of how Chapter 91 was enacted for a city created by filling wetlands.



Officials Explain \$1.4 B Cost Overruns or, 'How the Big Dig Became the Big Pig'

\$452 million – Project acceleration

Over 1,000 people have been hired to work day and night to try to accelerate things so the project can meet the 1998 completion date. Maybe they need more people; that way they can lose money faster. (Chairman Kerasiotes recently said it would cost extra if there was no acceleration).



\$321 million – Additional contracts awarded

Some contracts were a complete surprise to project officials. Adding funds for contracts to remove the elevated highway and put fans in the vent buildings cost dearly.

\$302 million – Contracts over budget

Despite the fact that many early contracts came in under budget, over \$300 million went to cover cost increases for many contracts. For example, Big Dig officials realized it was a good idea to protect the Red Line.

\$100 million – Management consultants

Another two years—add it up!—have been added to Bechtel/Parsons Brinckerhoff contract because the money spent for project acceleration didn't work (see above).

\$72 million – Land purchases

Land costs more now, but it's always a good investment!

\$90 million – Miscellaneous petty expenses

You, too, can help make policy! Attempting to stop even more funds from being sucked by the Big Dig vacuum, Central and Western Massachusetts legislators solicited ideas for financing the Central Artery project. The request for creative ideas, printed on the inside of candy bar wrappers, produced a bounty of suggestions:

- Float 1,000-year balloon bonds and hope they are wiped out by Y3K.
- Sell individual one-inch-square lots of the 27 acres created by removal of the elevated Artery at a price of \$223 each (generates \$1.4 billion).
- Convert the Masspike to a state-owned road, "maintained" by MassHighway, and eliminate entire Masspike bureaucracy (and maintenance budget).
- Encapsulate pieces of the old elevated Artery in plastic and sell as souvenirs.
- Sell naming rights to bridges, vent buildings, toll plazas, State House, and State Transportation Building.
- Create a high-speed Fast Lane and charge the yahoos using it double.



The early opening of the new Boston Convention Center strained most of the transportation system in South Boston. The new ferry/casino boat, however, successfully carried visitors in droves from Logan Airport to the Convention Center.

Welcome to The Boston Misinformer,

the annual April Fool's issue of The Boston Informer, an otherwise "serious" newsletter covering development, construction and transportation downtown.

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We're already 1.4 billion lira over budget...
can we skip the marble and paint some faux stone
and a few murals?

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You were asking...

- Q. I thought the upcoming statue memorializing three women was to be the last on Commonwealth Mall. What's this new statue I heard about?
- A. The American Standard Company has donated a 12-foot-long bronze bathtub to commemorate the invention of the bathtub in Boston. In keeping with tradition, the City will deposit this donation on the Commonwealth Mall.
- Q. Masspike has insisted that no more than \$50 million can be found to finance surface restoration after the elevated Central Artery is taken down. Now they can find \$1.4 billion for the cost overrun. How come?
- A. Where there's a will, there's a way.
- Q. I read that Mass. General Hospital is planning to convert the old Charles Street jail into a hotel. How would that work?
- A. Very efficiently—meals would be taken to the rooms at regular intervals and room doors unlocked only after the bill is paid.
- Q. Now that the Legislature has changed the way the MBTA is funded, what changes might riders see?
- A. The MBTA will start leasing billboards along the commuter rail rights-of-way and the Riverside line; ads on bus schedules; leasing stations for weddings and conferences; charging premiums for on-time buses; and selling naming rights for all lines.
- Q. How many auditors does it take to monitor Big Dig finances?
- A. As many as there are politicians trying to score publicity points.

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